

138.Fatima Oliver

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SPEAKERS

Fatima Oliver, Brad Miller

We have Fatimah See, Oliver, the author of the prescription is in the dirt. And she has a great story to tell about in her life, a life of self reflection, and how she's worked through a process in her life and Fatimah. We are so happy to have you today as our guest on beyond adversity. Thank you so much. I really appreciate the invite. Well, that is awesome to have you here with us here today. Your book is called the prescription is in the dirt, fascinated by that title. And we'll get into that in as a part of our conversation here. But I your your book is going to be about how self reflection and other things like that help people overcome suffering.

But tell us about your story about what motivated you to write this book, which is a bit of biographical tale. What kind of things challenges if you had in your life? Tell us a little bit of story about Fatimah? Yes, well, the the book, it really was, it is an extension of therapy. For me, it's an extension of freedom to be able to express myself in the truth way I know how and only give a voice to all the things that I felt, and all the pain that I've experienced. I've had a hard life just like a lot of people in this world. And I like to say the best way that I know how to say it is that I was sheltered. But when I say that, I mean that I was sheltered from affection. I was sheltered from Bill insecurity, I was sheltered from an emotional connection or any type of affirmation of our self worth self worth.

I grew up in a single parent home with all boys, all brothers, I was the only girl and so it was a very tough environment, not much room for any type of emotions to be shown it was more so get your

butt up and let's move on. In the process of them, my mom she was tough as nails and sometimes tough to a fault.

But growing up in that way, it definitely gave me aid to be able to make some horrible decisions. Growing up really, all the way up until maybe even a shoot a few years ago when I really learned to surrender my entire self to Christ but, but just really making some crazy decisions. I'm a burn victim that was burned on 25% of my body. By the age of two, I was abandoned by my father, so I had to deal with some daddy issues. I've lost a brother, I've lost a child. I've been physically abused. I've been sexually abused. I've experienced emotional mental abuse. And and I continue to challenge I like to look at it as challenging anxiety and depression.

But I also have experienced God's mercy. And I have experienced his strength in my weakest moments, I've also been able to feel his comfort in the most painful times of my life. So So this book kind of engulfs a lot of those situations.

Look at it as an inspirational memoir, because I'm just telling my truth. And I'm so grateful to be in a place where I'm liberated enough to be able to do that.

So Fatimah that you've shared with you your story and lots of challenges bird victim, a victim of abuse and other things that you have mentioned there being real challenges, depression and so on. And your book, you say that cancer or the prescription is in the dirt? Yeah. What's the dirt is the dirt, these experiences you're talking about?

Yes. But dirt is all those things for me. And for other people, I would say things you don't want to talk about those taboo things, the discussions that you have behind closed doors that make you feel like your lesser self, the turmoil and pain and the sorrow that people expect you to give up and get over but you're still struggling with. It can be addictions, but you can be addicted to anything I found out I was addicted to emotional shopping can be a vast amount of addiction, but really anything that is so dirty and grimy that you're embarrassed to talk about because you're a Christian and a Christian is supposed to look a certain way and walk a certain way and talk a certain way, or that you're professional and you're supposed to have this certain type of decorum. But on the inside, you're broken. And the dirt is all that brokenness. And the solution to to grow through that brokenness is honestly dealing with it, not avoiding it, not trying to go around it because eventually you're going to have to face it. And so the book shares how I went through a bunch of these different events that I shared, and the baby steps that I took To the

times where I felt like I didn't have a choice but to live in it. And just slowly making my way to realizing that God did love me that I am important. And that his love covers me like a blanket. And that it's okay to challenge it's okay to not be okay. But it's never okay to, to just sit in that space of not being okay and just accepting it as that's just your way of life.

Well, it's interesting how you frame this discussion here Fatimah in terms of how all these facing your fears, facing the difficulties challenge you had, and go into those dark places has been the way to deal with them and get get through them. Because and if you look at the prescription as in medicine, as an antidote isn't dirt, all the dirt stuff, that's an interesting way to put in. Because if we allow ourselves to we can be buried, right, we can just use the metaphor we can be buried by circumstances we can be buried all those things you mentioned, there are people who do not get out of those who gets stuck, who get stuck or destroyed by that they can be distracted by a health issue like the Bernie was destroyed by the mental health issues, and by the family dynamics and financial issues, any number of things that we allow ourselves to we can be destroyed by them or buried by them. But you mentioned something there that I think it's so important. You said I took baby steps. Let's talk for a minute about some of the actual steps that you took. I like to call them bold actions. What are some of the actions that you took that kept you from being stuck or buried by the dirt, so to speak? And to start to move out of that, that dark place that you're at? And zoos, what are some of the things you actually did? What are some of the actions that you took? Well, candidly,

I was stuck for a long time. These are things that occurred from when I was two years old, all the way through to my late 40s, just a couple years ago, and it became a way of life for me became a behavior a mental acceptance of this is just my life, this presence of self victimization, even though I was by all accounts of victim and a lot of these situations, it became easy to fit in that victimization, and just say, this is the way my life is supposed to be. And nothing's ever gonna go my way. And I'm sure we've all heard the song, but

one of the so people will take comfort in playing the victim belting out there are they

comfortable to be comfortable, because you're so used to it, right? It's like an old chair, you love the chair, you know, it needs to get thrown out, you know, you deserve a new one, but it's so dang uncomfortable. And sometimes being a victim can be comfortable, especially if you get to a certain level of attention. But and so for me, I believe that I laid in that for a very long time to the point where depression and anxiety kind of took over my life, I was medicated for being clinically depressed. I have to where were thought to go to the doctor and get diagnosed to being clinically

depressed. But I stopped there for 10 years, and I just medicated myself and medicated myself. But I didn't deal with the issues that got me there. So I would say maybe two years ago, I got to a place where I, I felt I had no choice. I was breaking down, I felt like I was having honestly a mental breakdown. And I had a actually a come to Jesus moment where I had to embrace the fact that the way I was managing my life, the way that I was managing my, the depression and the anxiety that was getting more and more out of control. It wasn't working. Okay. And I had to humble myself, I believe that help comes with humility. And I had to humble myself to say God, my way isn't working. I had to be open to another way of doing things and not the way that I was doing. So I started making steps to retrain my thinking, taking my my my thoughts captive, if you will say, I started listening to people like Carolyn Lee, who she's a Christian who studies the brain. She studies the subconscious and the conscious and learning that it takes 63 days to be able to convince your subconscious to do things for you to be able to do things in the natural naturally do it without a lot of resistance. So I put myself on a 63 day plan to start to stop trying to think negative. So whenever a negative thought would naturally come into my mind because there was a natural way of living. I would focus and say Nope, don't think that try to think something positive. And beyond that I surrounded myself with, with, with messages that I could go back to when I when I felt defeated to listen of encouraging messages about who God says I was even though I didn't believe it. But on top of that, I decided to go against the naysayers go against the traditions of my culture, and actually physically go and talk to a therapist. And so I did things in the natural and I allow about faith, I believe that these are the things that God would want me to do to become a healthy person. And I actually went to sit and speak with a therapist, and start to uncover the reason why I was having such a horrible time living,

he decided to dig in the dirt didn't yet to use your metaphor from from your book. What I mean by that is that, you know, you started you know, to really get deep into some difficult areas, and areas are many people choose to leave buried deep within a destructive and, but that's a a admirable thing that you have done, especially you talk about the process, the or you talk about the 63 day process. And I'm, I'm a big believer that the decision to act is instantaneous, but the process means we are just starting a process, but we have to decide to act and then but actually put one foot in front of another and actually do it. And that's hard to do. And to keep the process going because you don't transform instantaneously. I don't think you decide to transform, you could decide to transform, but the actual process of transformation is a process. You know, biblically, I like to think about the 40 days and 40 years in the wilderness and things like this. that's a that's a that's a process there. But

commitment, you know, right? And it's like you're you're making the commitment, the commitment comes in way after the emotional moment. And it's a commitment to yourself that I'm going to do this way beyond those those initial feelings of I need my life.

Yeah, that's a commitment. I like to think about covenant promise, things like that, how we need to put power in our promises and, and make that commitment go, you know, got a deep, emotional, spiritual level. And so let's talk about a couple things are elements of this process from the depths so important that you decided that you were unsatisfied enough with your state of affairs as they were to do something about it. But when you do something about it, you have to you deal with things in several different planes of our existence. And one of those planes is the is a spiritual, I believe. So tell me about how drawing on any kind of a spiritual power, anything greater than yourself, gave you power gave you energy, it gave you the sustenance that you needed to make some make some changes.

Yes, it was nothing but my faith that God gave me the courage to walk through the doors. I'm a prideful person, a very proud person I grew up to be that way. And like I said, earlier, emotions were definitely things that didn't really display, it was something that I never really tapped into. So even if I was feeling scared, or anything, I would always tell myself, no toughen up. And so to be able to, to sit at God's feet, and actually pray and say, God, give me the courage to, to go to somebody and tell them I need help. That was huge for me. And, and, and so one of those other pieces of it is that for me, I wanted to be able to find someone that I could be my truest self with. And what I mean by that is not have to change my speech. In my day to day life, I speak about how good God is to me, I speak about my time that I spend with him and devotional time and in personal prayer time, making it in the set time making a point, like a date with God, and spending that time and even in the midst of me going through the pressed moments in my life, or just the chaoticness of my life or tumultuous situations, I still made that time. So I really believe that God was leading my steps. But even in doing that, and speaking in the natural, the counselor that I got, I made sure I spoke my language, so she could guide me. But I also wanted someone who would pray for me, and who would pray with me. And so that was one of those steps that I felt like God was in the in in the midst of our conversations. Additionally, my Bible study group that I had at my church, it was about I found one that was geared towards healing women, healing women. And it happened to be a Celebrate Recovery Program, which I had no idea at the time. And so I wound up going through a nine months, a step by step program of Celebrate Recovery. And it's similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, or Narcotics Anonymous, anonymous, but the Bible, the foundational principles are biblical principles. And so I committed myself to go on through the steps and in the midst of each book that we would go through. It was a self reflection opportunity, and God was through the Scriptures that was included in the book study. That was always in the midst of any type of changing that was happening in my life.

Well, that is an awesome thing for you to share there how that that power came from a place greater than yourself. But it also came through the, through the environment, the system of other people, in many cases, the your Bible study group, you mentioned your therapist, and let's just talk

about emotions. Now what I mean by that is the power of sustaining, loving, caring, accountable, loving relationships, to help you keep you going and to do this process and how, then maybe you can be there for some other people. So describe to me a little bit about what happens when you've made this decision to change. Now you're, you've made the baby steps, and you're going to drone on this spiritual plane. But tell us about the role of loving and caring, accountable relationships and changing.

Absolutely. So one of the things I'll say starting out is nobody is meant to do life alone. Jesus didn't do life alone, and he could. And he still had community. None of us are ever meant to do life alone, we all need some sort of a tribe or a group of people that are like minded to support us and upward as the Bible says, We're to bear the infirmities of the weak. And so we need to be able to drop our pride to tell people when we're weak, but also to have that expectation that the people that we encompass around are there to support us. And so I always had a tribe of women, whether it was from church or, or just Christians in general, who always navigated around. So always had that bit of a support system. And when I decided that I needed to go and speak to someone, it was actually those group of women who came to me and had that conversation with me. And when I was at my lowest and saying, I don't feel like I want to live, I just I don't I don't know if I could go another day. They were the ones that intervened and gave me Godly counsel and said, I think you need talk therapy, in addition to what you're already doing, and they prayed for me. And when it was my first day of getting ready to go to therapy, I was sitting in my car, nervous as nails. And I was able to reach out to these individual women. And they encouraged me and congratulated me and was celebrating me and we're 1000s of miles apart and make clear for gave me the homework to let them know how my first session went as soon as I was done. So knowing that I had people available to me, that was my safe place to fall. And that in my dirty cry space, that they were there and not judging me, it is critical to your walk. And it's critical to your healing. I believe that everybody needs a safe place to fall. And sometimes that's not your family, sometimes it's a girlfriend, sometimes it's your spouse, sometimes, if you don't have those type of outlets, sometimes it's going to have to be that therapist. But everybody needs a safe place to fall in and safe place to be that their self, whether it's a horrible myth, whatever, whatever state they're in, that they have that safe place to be able to be that be in that space and not be judged. Yeah, I think that critical to healing,

I agree with you 100 100% Fatimah, and especially what you mentioned there, how you were at, you know, kind of reach your wits ends or had had some really tough places for you, you know, concerning some dramatic actions, and sound like people stepped into your life that you already had built a relationship with. And if you didn't have that, then you would be in a much worse situation. And I think what I'm hearing you share is how important it is to seek out these healthy, vital relationships. And they're tough to do because it means that you've got to be take some risk

to do them. And there's not a it's not always just a pat on the back thing. You know, it's accountability, and it's challenging. And it's the, you know, not only affirmation, but sometimes it's the calling out and things and that's good, you know, that's a good thing. So we got, I consider that the kind of the fuel that sustains us, you know, when we are looking to do that. It's that word of encouragement that we can have. And that's so important to have and we can do for others. Let's talk for a minute about the cognitive part, the mind part, the transformation of the mind, that needs to that needs to happen. And I like to equate that a lot to discipline, to self discipline to habits to practices to the things we do it might be a morning routine you mentioned about you know about a practice of Bible study and things like this. What are some of the things that you might advocate about self discipline to help transform the mind to come out to a better place from to dig through the dirt as you would say,

Yeah, it's definitely one of it is so more mental than anything. And like we've talked about before that commitment, if there is nothing else that should be taken away, it's don't break a promise to yourself. And so when I made the promise of the commitment that I was going to walk through the steps of the Bible Study Program, or that I was going to go to therapy, and I was going to dedicate myself to, to change in my life, I had to put in natural kind of kind of precautionary, to make myself continue going when I didn't feel like doing it. So anything that would trigger me anything that would make me feel like I don't want to do it today, I had to go ahead and and determine what those triggers were. And then how I would fight against those triggers. If it's, I would call a girlfriend who I knew would encourage me to get in my car and go, or I would, I would, I don't know, pray more, or read my favorite scripture, whatever I knew, before I was filling it, whatever I knew that I could do to help me to get over that hump, I put into place ahead of time, so that when I hit those walls of I really don't feel like driving, and it's rainy, and it's snowing, I just don't feel like doing it today that I was able to lean on those contingencies, if you will. So that I could push myself to do the work that I had committed to myself, and I just, I didn't want to be somebody that broke a promise to myself, I had broken enough promises to myself, I really wanted to change. Just change the trajectory of my life. And that takes will and it takes work. And I just had to commit to do the work. And I think that's what everybody has to do. Ultimately, you have to, you have to commit to doing the work,

you have to commit to go to work, make the promise so that you were you framed, it was very interesting, very good and making the promise yourself, and let's, I would also push it a little bit further with your team, let's make sure that when those promises are kept, we are feel, you know, the affirmation of that. But also, if promises are broken, we need to feel the appropriate pain and the disappointment with that. Because that's a part of this process you're talking about is that commitment, that covenant, in the promises, you got to make the promise first, you got to sustain the promise and you got to you know, keep the promise in order to come up to a better place.

And you've come out to a better place in many facets, as I'm understanding what you're sharing here today, because you made a promise to yourself first and foremost. And you've kept the promise, even if he's a little he had moments of, you know, very uncomfortable moments, to say the least, absolutely chose to work through that. That's,

I want to say that, I think it's important to say there's a difference between being convicted of what you when you lack, or when you miss the mark. And when you feel condemnation, and the enemy can use that guilt that you feel to make you feel like a horrible human being because you know, a horrible human being because you just couldn't get out of bed and you couldn't make it to that therapist, or you just couldn't keep your commitment to yourself on that day. For me, cry to have to stay center, even all these things that I did in the natural, all these disciplinaries that I put in place, got Christ still had to stay the center of everything so that I will be able to know the difference between, okay, I missed the mark and God I'm gonna do better. And I feel that conviction I promised myself and the difference between that and you're a horrible person. See, ya know, you couldn't keep that promise to yourself, you just got to go back to the way you always have been, you may as well give up now, you got to be able to know the difference between the voices that are speaking in your head. And that comes with the relationship with Christ.

That's what I would just say that's where we have to have a believer to have a belief in being covered by grace. Yeah, that grace needs to cover all this, which is that we don't deserve anything, but we are loved. Anyhow. And that's where some of those relations we talked about come into play where the spiritual piece comes into play. And certainly when we talk about making promises and so on, we need to Yes, you put it in perspective of the conviction is a different thing than the condemnation. Because if you feel condemned, that's a place that you can easily give up or be buried. Right. You can go to those go to those bad places and I can't help but think about reflect with you a little bit here even today. Fatimah we are happy to be talking on New Year's Eve 2020 and we're recording this on that day and a lot of people are thinking you know, good riddance. To 2020, at least look forward to 21. And I'm certainly one of those people, but

we

often talk about resolutions and things like that, where, and so if it happens, you make a resolve to change things, you know, to lose weight to be healthy to, you know, stop watching too much TV to, you know, be nicer to my spouse, whatever it is, to read the Bible, everyday, whatever it is,

but it often goes away. But, you know, by the time a couple weeks go on, and if we can move away, in my mind, at least from the resolve, things are just so absolute, and you think more about a promise, the emotional promise that you make is ongoing, like a daily kind of a thing as a promise thing. So I think there's some really good things that you've got in your book here and, and tell us about your how your book has impacted your life, but also how maybe your book and your teaching and what you've reflected with others, your story has been helpful to other people tell us a story about maybe somebody who's coming to your own read that your teaching has been helpful to?

Well, it's actually been pretty amazing and humbling, because I definitely wrote it. With the thinking that again, it was an extension of therapy, for me being able to finally speak on these things that I've kept captive in my heart for so long. And then when I did it, and it was done, and it was published, it's just like, okay, you have your way, and you want with everything in you to be able to know that you're not the only one with these thoughts, or with these type of experiences. So being able to hear women reach out to me and just share their share their impact from the book has been outstanding. And so there was someone actually who reached out and I hadn't spoken to her in about a year. And I just sent an email and like an email there and just share that my book with that. And she got the book and she reached out to me, she was one of the first ones and she said that God had been dealing with her about some things regarding her father, and, and she kind of felt alone, she kind of felt that she was the only one dealing with feeling abandoned by her father. And to realize that I had went through that similar thing to the point of having a moment where my mom who my father biological father was, was being questioned. And she could relate so well with that, because her father was in a place where he was questioned if he was her dad, and she's like, in her, you know, 3040 years old, and it broken her heart. So to read that in my book, she felt relatability. But again, she onto that she also felt that her heart, her husband, had been having some discussion as far as just her working on her own soul healing, and that there were some things that she was holding on to grudges and path hurt that she really needed to let go of. And she had been praying about it but didn't know the first place to start. When she read my book, she felt that a seed had been planted in her heart, and that and she had some sort of direction and as far as the path that the thing that she needed to do, and so she just caught to thank me and I really was just floored. I didn't really know what to say, because that was one of the first people that had responded to what God had done in my life and just to be able to see my life being a mirror for someone else. I mean, I can't even explain to you how humbling that makes me and how, how much more I want God to be able to use me in that way.

That's awesome. Well, so is it fair to that person? And I'm sure many others can be impacted by your book too. prescription is in the dirt. How can people find out more about you and about your book and how can they get the book?

Yes, well, the book is on Amazon in ebook and paperback version. And so you can definitely go there and you can leave a review once you read it you can actually out encourage you to read the reviews if you're just kind of on the fence about whether you want to get it or not. To speak to me and to chat with me. I'd love to hear from you. The listeners can go to Facebook, I am Fatimah Oliver on Facebook, Instagram, the tema, Oliver 1975. LinkedIn, the team Oliver, Reddit, the team Oliver, just look up the Thema Oliver, and I'm pretty sure that you'll find me Awesome.

Well, and we will certainly put all those links in our show notes at Dr. Brad beller.com. And, and we it's been our pleasure to have Fatimah haulover. The author of the prescription is in the dirt as our guest today on the beyond diversity podcast with Dr. Brad Miller. Thank you for Team